



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS TOP A HALF BILLION DOLLARS *RECORD-SETTING COLLECTIONS BENEFIT TENNESSEE CHILDREN*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The Tennessee Department of Human Services collected more than a half billion dollars for children during the last state fiscal year. Each child support office in the state is also reporting increases over the previous year's collections. More than \$508 million were collected and disbursed, an increase of nearly 60 percent in five years.

"Child support must be dependable and reliable," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "For so many families, that support can be the difference between being self-sufficient or becoming dependant on the state for assistance. We are using all the tools at our disposal to make sure parents don't walk away from their responsibility—their children."

The most successful tool DHS uses in obtaining court-ordered child support is administrative wage assignments, also known as garnishment. A new state law, sponsored by Rep. Willie Borchert and Senator Roy Herron, now gives judges the opportunity to require self-employed parents to set up a bank account for child support payments.

DHS handles more than 400,000 child support cases across the state, and 265,000 of these have court orders mandating support. Yet, 40 percent of child support dollars that should be collected in these cases goes unpaid.

"We know there are children and families that are not receiving the support they are owed, and this is unacceptable," said Lodge. "Our staff is not only tracking down those mothers and fathers who are running away from their responsibility, but we are also working with the legislature to pass laws that benefit the children who are not receiving their support."

DHS utilizes federal offset programs, including IRS Intercept, Passport Denial and Financial Institution Data Match, to help children receive their much-needed and overdue support. This past year, DHS seized more than 34,000 federal tax refunds, totaling \$ 40.8 million.

For more information on the Child Support Program visit: http://state.tn.us/humanserv/cs/cs_main.htm
For more information on Federal Offset Programs, visit:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/fop/fop.htm>

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